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ABSTRACT

A detailed description and sociological analysis were made of peer interaction in a public school kindergarten located in a large urban school district. Data collected over a 5-month observation period included field note transcriptions of hundreds of interaction events, records of formal and informal interviews with classroom participants, and various unobtrusively obtained data. Analysis focused on identifying the social goals of children in child-to-child interactions. Affiliation, competence, and status goals were identified. Affiliation goals enabled children to feel they are connected with others, that others perceived them as worthy social interactants, and that others cared about them and wanted to do things with them. Competence goals promoted children's feelings of competence, conveyed the sense that they were capable of accomplishing school tasks, and suggested that they were recognized as members of the group achieving what is expected in school. Status goals enabled individuals to feel superior to or more important than others, to manipulate or control the actions of others, and to assert their own status in relationship to the status of others. Findings related to each goal area are described, and reference is made to the interactions of children in the contexts of their kindergarten. Within each goal area, sets of strategies for accomplishing social motives are identified. A taxonomy of social goals in outline form is appended. A three-page list of references is also included. (RH)

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Children's Social Goals in Kindergarten Peer Interactions

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CHILDREN'S SOCIAL GOALS IN KINDERGARTEN PEER INTERACTIONS

Face-to-face interaction among children within the context of the classroom is a complex area of inquiry to which little scientific attention has been paid. Educational practitioners have not had a firm theoretical or research-based foundation from which to make classroom decisions related to establishing classroom social environments or guiding child-to-child interaction. Teachers seem to accept the importance of social interactions among peers but are without the knowledge and understanding necessary to influence children's face-to-face contacts in active, positive ways.

The goal of this study was to provide a detailed description and sociological analysis of peer interaction in a kindergarten classroom, and in doing so, to contribute to the knowledge base of social interaction in classroom settings. This and other studies of child-to-child interaction within classroom contexts can provide educators with information and insight which may be important as decisions are made with regard to instructional goals and practices and the establishment of classroom environments. This study was designed to add information and insight through an in-depth naturalistic investigation into the social structures of a kindergarten classroom. The study sought to generate information which can be used to inform classroom practice so that educators may provide experiences which serve to move closer to the goal of maximizing social development.

Research Perspective

This study has taken the point of view that classrooms are complex and dynamic social systems in which children develop and exercise their interpersonal skills.

Researchers who have looked closely at how children become competent members of social systems such as classrooms have called for studies which "move beyond the past research emphasis of looking only at primary socializers or at predetermined social rules as determinants of social action" (Wallat & Green, 1979, p. 284). These social scientists have called for research through which an understanding of how social systems emerge in classrooms and how children develop social skills in multiple situations may be developed. This study represents such an effort.

It seems redundant to assert that interaction should be studied from an interactionist perspective. Still, it is important to clarify this assertion. The interactionist perspective begins with the assumption that objects, people, situations, and events do not possess their own meaning; meaning is conferred on them (Blumer, 1969; Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979). This meaning is constructed socially as individuals interact. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982) explain:

> people in a given situation (for example, students in a particular class) often develop common definitions (or 'share perspectives' in the symbolic interactionist language) since they regularly interact and share experiences, problems, and background; but consensus is not inevitable. . . meaning is always subject to negotiation. (p. 33)

From an interactionist research perspective, the process by which social participants construct and negotiate social reality is the subject matter to be studied. In this study, the students in the kindergarten under investigation were the social participants of interest and the forms and functions of classroom interaction, which they constructed and continually renegotiated among themselves, the focus of the research.

Research Procedures

Uncovering the socially constructed meanings which children use in their classroom interactions is a difficult process, requiring special data gathering techniques and analytic methods. The investigation of meanings and understandings held by children requires the collection of data that capture their perspectives. As Schwartz and

Jacobs (1979) have written,

> We want to know what the actors know, see what they see, understand what they understand. As a result, our data attempt to describe their vocabularies, ways of looking, their sense of the important and unimportant, and so on. (p. 7)

The data for this study included field note transcriptions of hundreds of "interaction events" (Mehan, 1982), records of formal and informal interviews with classroom participants, and various unobstrusively obtained data which helped reveal participant perspectives.

The researcher entered the setting as participant observer after the children returned from Christmas holidays in January, and continued a cycle of observations through the last day of May in the same year. Over the five month observation period, 26 classroom visits were made. Observations ranged from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 hours in duration and were evenly divided among the days of the school week. A total of 80 hours of classroom activity was recorded in 345 single-spaced pages of field notes. Observations were scheduled so that social behavior during all parts of the kindergarten day could be observed. The researcher accompanied the class to lunch, to the playground, to the library, to programs in the auditorium, and to activities with other classes. The teacher and researcher agreed as part of their initial bargain that the observation schedule of the researcher should not influence the activities planned for children, nor the inverse. The goal was to capture as nearly as possible the contexts of kindergarten activity as they naturally ocurred in everyday classroom events.

Both "formal" and "informal" (Spradley, 1979) interview techniques were used in this study. Formal interviews, interviews which occurred at appointed times, were conducted with the classroom teacher. Informal interviews, where adults working in the classroom were asked questions, were conducted throughout the observational cycle. All informal interviews were conducted while interviewees were away from their duties with children.

Unobstrusive data were collected by the researcher from his first contacts with

the school district through the last day at the research site. Some of these data included the following: school and district reports concerning demographics, test results, and socioeconomic status; official documents such as procedural manuals, pupil progression plans, annual reports to parents, and accreditation self-studies; student cumulative records; student produced artifacts such as school work, art, or found items; teacher produced artifacts such as activity samples, plans, and play and work materials provided to children; representational maps; and samples or descriptions of objects and materials such as commercially produced curriculum materials and classroom equipment supplied by the school. These data provided insight into participant histories and influences on the setting under investigation and helped establish contextual reference points.

The Spradley (1980) DRS (Developmental Research Sequence) model was selected to guide the data collection and analysis procedures of this study. Spradley divided the data analysis sequence into 12 steps. The intent of the analysis was to search the data for the social patterns through which the children of the study made sense of their interaction with peers. Selective application of the levels of analysis suggested by the Spradley model made the accomplishment of this goal more feasible. As Spradley (1980) explained, "analysis of any kind involves a way of thinking. It refers to the systemic examination of something to determine its parts, the relationship among its parts, and their relationship to the whole" (p. 85). The DRS provides a structure for the systematic examination of social behavior recorded in field notes. Spradley identified several levels of analytic inquiry, including domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and searching for cultural themes. Each of these levels of analysis was applied in this study (for a complete description of research procedures, see Hatch, 1984b).

Participants and Setting

The students in a single kindergarten classroom were the primary subjects of this

study. The classroom teacher, the school principal, the classroom aide, volunteer parents, and other adults, including the researcher, who entered the classroom scene were secondary participants. The social situation of the classroom, rather than individual subjects, was selected as the unit upon which observations would be focused (see Becker, 1970).

The study was conducted in a public school located in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States. The school neighborhood is geographically close to the inner city. Over the past few years, some black families have moved into what had been an all white area. The district and the school operate busses under a court ordered desegregation plan.

The research kindergarten had an enrollment of 24: 13 white females; 1 black female; 8 white males; and 2 black males. State law mandates kindergarten attendance and, as required, each child was at least five years old as of September 1, of the school year. Two children were repeating kindergarten. Of the 24 children, 11 had applied for and were receiving free or reduced price school lunches. Fifteen children were living with both parents, six with their mothers alone, and three with a mother and a stepfather. Most children had at least one brother or sister, while the average number of siblings was just over two. The teacher was a white female who had been teaching at the research school for more than 20 years; 6 years in kindergarten.

The research classroom was a well-equipped primary room with sufficient space, facilities, and materials for the kindergarten program. The curriculum provided by the district and implemented by the teacher was organized using a thematic approach. For example, during the month of January, woodland animals, winter, energy, and Martin Luther King were the themes around which the children's learning activities were organized. Within themes, specific readiness skills were stressed each month. January's skills included, among others, copying first name, combining objects, copying shapes and patterns, recognizing lower case letters, and comparing size, quantity, and volume.

The teacher, as suggested by the district curriculum, divided her day into small group activities before lunch and large group activities after lunch. Children were divided into four ability groups which rotated through four learning centers each morning. In the afternoon, the teacher read stories, presented social studies and science lessons, showed filmstrips and films, and directed physical education, music, art, and language development activities.

Findings

The question which guided the design, data collection, and initial analytic phases of this study was: What are the character and nature of student-to-student interaction in the classroom being studied? As data analysis proceeded, a more focused question emerged. What are the social goals of children in child-to-child interactions? This question guided the completion of the analysis and became the central question which these findings seek to answer.

To provide a framework for understanding the findings reported here, it is important to draw distinctions among kinds of goals. Individuals engaged in face-to-face interaction communicate information on a variety of levels. Goffman (1967) made a distinction between two such levels: substantive and ceremonial. At the substantive level, the content of the communication has observable value in its own right. The substance or topic of communication has utility for participants in the interaction. An example of substantive communication among kindergarten children in the study was the frequent sharing of information about classwork. The substance of talk about work had value in its own right for the children. Such communication gave them information which contributed to their success in completing their assigned tasks.

Goffman (1967) defined ceremonial communicative activity as a "conventionalized means of communication by which the individual expresses his character and conveys his appreciation of the other participants in the situation" (p. 54). At this level

of communication, individuals orchestrate their behavior in such a way as to influence others to form a favorable impression of them. An example of ceremonial communication among studied children was their constant use of behaviors which projected and protected their images as competent students. A detailed description of these and other forms of ceremonial communication will be presented later.

Ceremonial communication is the medium through which individuals establish and maintain social relationships. While kindergarten children participated in substantive communication regarding classwork, they were also communicating through their ceremonial behavior. The goals of children's substantive communications were on the surface of their interactions and therefore easy to identify. The goals of their ceremonial communications, here called social goals, were much more difficult to uncover.

As Goffman (1967) pointed out, some activity can be ceremonial without having a substantive component, but all substantive activity will carry ceremonial meaning, provided it is performed in the presence of others. On the suface, young children's interactions often seem fragmented, incomplete, and without substance. Ervin-Tripp (1982) and Genishi and DiPaolo (1982) have observed that often it is difficult to understand children's interaction goals. The difficulty may be related to Goffman's principle. Some interactions among children may be purely ceremonial in nature, in which case a search for substantive goals would be futile. In addition, failure to recognize that the accomplishment of social goals is an attendant feature of all substantive interactions can distort interpretations of child-to-child interactions.

The goal of this reaearch has been to understand children's interactive behavior from the perspective of the children themselves. When social goals are described in these findings, they will be described as children's social goals. Children's social goals are the objectives which children in the study sought to accomplish in their face-to-face ceremonial activities.

Analysis of children's interactions revealed the following social goals which

have been divided into three basic areas.

1. Affiliation goals--to feel that they are connected with others, that others perceive them as worthy social interactants, and that others care about them and want to do things with them.

Competence goals--to feel that they are competent individuals, capable of accomplishing school tasks, and that they are recognized as members of the group which is achieving what is expected in school.

3. Status goals--to feel that they are superior to or more important than others. that they are able to manipulate or control the actions of others, and that they are able to assert their own status in relationship to the status of others.

Findings related to each goal area will be described making reference to primary data from the study, that is, the interactions of children in the contexts of their kindergarten. Within each goal area, sets of strategies for accomplishing social motives in that area will be identified (Appendix A provides a "taxonomy of social goals" in outline form).

Affiliation Goals

Children in the study used child-to-child interactions to accomplish goals related to feeling affiliated with their peers. Analysis of children's interactions revealed objectives such as feeling connected with others, believing that they are seen by others as desirable interaction partners, and feeling that others care about them and want to participate in activities with them. These goals motivated much of the social behavior children exhibited in a wide variety of activity contexts.

Studying the forces that motivated what appeared to be purely ceremonial social behavior among children provided an avenue for understanding children's social goals. Ceremonial activity is conventionalized communication individuals use independent of the observable substantive objectives of interaction. Purely ceremonial activity is that to which no substantive objectives can be traced. Making sense of purely ceremonial activity offers a way to understand children's social perceptions and goals.

What do children gain from interactions which seem disconnected from substantive objectives? What are the sources of frustration and satisfaction in such interactions? These are the kinds of questions which guided the analytic search for children's social motives.

Children on many occasions were observed having interactions in "baby talk." That is, they made contact verbally but without using understandable language. On other occasions, they used standard linguistic structures but substituted inappropriate or made-up words. Even though the communication of objective ideas was apparently not accomplished, children nevertheless talked back and forth and appeared to gain satisfaction from these exchanges. These kinds of ceremonial interactions ranged from brief, one-to-one contact exchanges to more complex group interchanges. Some examples from field note data follow.

> During independent work at table 2, Terry suddenly turns to Holly, looks as if she will speak but pauses, then: "Me-me-ma-ma." Holly was concentrating on her work, turns to Terry: "Huh?" Terry: "Me-me-ma-ma." They hold eye contact and exchange smiles, then return to their work.
>
> Gina returns to table 2 from restroom. She pauses behind her chair, staring at Benjamin. When he looks up, she gives him a big smile. Gina: "You lomp knee." Benjamin smiles, shifts in his seat, glances into her eyes, and nods. Gina [looking pleased] rolls her eyes and sits down.
>
> As children work at table 2, Cheryl: "Terry, do you know what a 'masteraft' is?" Terry: "Uh-un." Cheryl: "It's something like a treasure." Robin: "Did you mention treasure?" Cheryl repeats; "Treasure." Robin: "Treasure. . . treasure . . . beasure. . . easure. . . " [excited voice]. Amy: "Igloo. . . igloo." Robin: "Igloo be quiet." [using igloo as a person's name]. Cheryl: "Igloo shuddup." Gina: "Igloo."

Children involved in these largely ceremonial interactions enjoyed the attention and affirmative responses of peers. They smiled, made warm eye contact, and giggled together. They appeared to gain satisfaction from being engaged with others in positive social exchange even when there was no apparent substance to their communications. These interchanges were more that the playful use of language as some linguists might suggest. The outcomes of such interactions may include, as a byproduct,

the practice or exploration of newly acquired linguistic abilities (Garvey, 1977). However, from the participants' perspectives, the goal was not to practice using language but to connect with peers. For example, in the following excerpt, when one child was frustrated in his attempts to make contact with another through the use of baby talk, he switched to a more direct approach to accomplish his goal.

> Rod is chanting patterns of baby talk syllables to Elizabeth: "Do-do-ba-ba, do-do-ba-ba, do-ba-da-da. . ." Elizabeth does not respond. Rod: "Ooh, look at my rubber band (Elmer's Glue hanging from the ends of his fingers). I'ma put some on your nose." He puts his face close to hers and makes movements like he's wiping it on her face. Elizabeth plays along, smiles, and turns away as if to dodge the glue.

Analysis of the ceremonial elements which inhere in children's substantively directed interactions provided additional evidence that affiliation with peers was a social goal of children. In all kinds of child-to-child classroom contexts, children's interactions contained evidence suggesting that being in contact with others, being cared for by others, and being thought a desirable companion by others were important social goals. The substantive activities involved in the field note excerpts below provided contexts within which the attainment of social goals could be worked out. The substantive objectives evident on the surface of these interactions were taken to be legitimate and important to the participants. The analysis here sought to explore the ceremonial or social objectives which Goffman (1967) asserted are below the surface of all substantive activities observed by others. Studying the <u>ways</u> in which substantive goals were achieved provided a means for studying children's social goals. In the first example, the way one child persisted in questioning another revealed his desire to make contact as he provided help with materials.

> Children at table 2 are working on a cut and paste phonics sheet and deer picture to be colored. As Roger finishes his cut and paste, he says to Sue: "Susie, you ready for your picture?" Sue does not respond. Roger moves to stack of pictures, picks up two, and returns to seat. As he hands Sue a picture: "Susie, you ready for your picture? <u>Susie</u>, you ready for your picture?"

Two other interaction events serve as examples of children using substantive activity as a context for the expression of affiliation goals.

> Children at table 5 are using colored, transparent plastic shapes to trace a pattern. Sets of shapes are to be shared by pairs of children. George to Robin as he reaches for shapes shared by Robin and Nadine: "We don't have any little triangles." Robin, as George takes green triangle: "Here, take the yellow one (too)." Nadine: "Here's a purple." Robin: "We'll share."

> Teacher has given the children 10 minutes of "choice time." At table 2, Holly and Tess sit down with Holly's coloring books and begin coloring. Teacher asks if anyone has to go to the bathroom and Holly goes. Sandra sits down in Holly's seat. Holly comes back and grabs the book: "No!" Sandra turns to the other side where Tess is coloring. Tess pulls her book away from Sandra: "Uh-un!" Sandra: "I wanna color." Tess: "No, I'm colorin' (in this book) and she's colorin' (in that one)." Sandra looks as if tears will start: "Can't I color too?" Holly: "O.K." They sit down together.

The examples demonstrate the relationship of children's social affiliation goals to substantive classroom activity. Children wanted to be associated in positive ways with their peers and expressed these motives again and again across activity contexts. In both ceremonial and substantive interactions, affiliation goals proved to be important forces beneath the surface of children's face-to-face interactions.

Children used a variety of strategies to accomplish affiliation goals. Data analysis revealed three important sets of strategies in this area: (1) Ways to make contact; (2) Ways to check on standings with peers; and (3) Ways to express feelings of affection and belonging.

<u>Ways to make contact</u> included using direct requests and invitations. Requests were questions such as, "Will you play with me?" delivered one-to-one, or public appeals, e.g., "Who will play with me?" Invitations to join particular activities were a common "less direct" contact strategy. Invitations were usually, "You wanna. . .?" questions; for example, "You wanna go in the playhouse?" or, "You wanna play with playdough?"

While children were working and playing together, they made contact using conversation openers which revealed the utilization of an interaction etiquette similar to that of adults. Children used conversation openers which compel response from others. They used questions, appeals to the reciprocal nature of good manners, and compliments as they sought social contact with their classmates.

Indirect contact strategies were used to make contact. These included teasing, clowning, joking, and baby talk. These strategies provided an automatic escape if rejection ensued. The child whose indirect attempts were not well received could protest, "I was just playing." That is, they could claim another meaning for their actions. Goffman (1971) described "remedies" which adults use to redefine unfavorable meanings attributed to their behavior. These remedies share characteristics with children's indirect contact strategies.

Sometimes children placed themselves in close proximity with others involved in social interaction without using verbal entry moves. In Corsaro's (1979) study of the interactions of preschoolers, "nonverbal entry" strategies were the most frequently used "access rituals" employed by the children. In the kindergarten setting of this study, moving closer to others almost never provided access to interactions. This may explain why the "proximity strategy" was used so infrequently.

Ways to check on standings with peers were strategies for finding out how others were seeing them. Children used direct and indirect approaches to determine where they stood as affiliation partners. As with contact strategies, the more direct the method of gaining responses, the higher the risk of rejection. The typical form of direct checks on standings with peers was, "I like you; do you like me?" A negative response to such a question was difficult to deliver. The askers exhibited their vulnerability by expressing their affection and then, in effect, dared their friends to reject their overtures.

Children used indirect approaches more often than direct approaches to get feedback on their standings with peers. "We're the same, huh?" was a common form for

indirect approaches in this area. Children worked at aligning themselves with others by pointing out similarities in their classwork, experiences, and, as in the following example, superior standing in relation to others.

> Nadine, referring to Bob: "He doesn't know what he doin'."
> Tess: "He don't know what he's doin'. We know what we're doin' 'cause we're bigger. We're bigger, ain't we Roger? We're bigger 'n Bob, ain't we, Roger?" Roger: "Yeah."
> Tess: "And we're smarter, huh?"

In this incident, Bob became the object around which Nadine, Tess, and Roger established their mutual affiliation. If any discomfort was associated with demeaning Bob, it was overridden by their desire to extablish their standings among themselves.

Ways to express feelings of affection and belonging were identified. As noted above, direct expressions of affection such as "I love you" or "I like you" were rare and usually followed with an appeal for a reciprocation of feelings, i.e., "Do you love/like me?" Children utilized a number of other staategies for expressing their affection for one another. One such strategy was to shower affiliates with attention, praise, or offers of gifts. In addition, children offered help to other children, shared materials, and performed minor courtesies as ways of expressing feelings of affection. These interaction moves were exchanged among virtually all of the children on occasion. It was clear across observations that being cooperative, helpful, and courteous were valued by children as they interacted. They used these behaviors to send important affiliation signals.

Another way children expressed feelings of affection was to take the side of a peer involved in a dispute or to come to the aid of a peer who had been physically or emotionally hurt. Children understood that expressions of loyalty and sympathy were valuable tools for demonstrating their worth as affiliates. Their support and consolations were often dramatic and public in manifestation, as if to guarantee the impression that "I'm the kind of person who cares about and stands up for my friends."

Children in the study expressed their feelings of affection through physical

contact. They hugged, wrestled, bumped and nudged, held hands, groomed, and touched each other in all classroom contexts. For boys and girls, being in physical contact with peers was very important. Often boys were observed putting a "roughhouse" face on their touching. They wrestled, pushed, and bumped more often than girls. While waiting for a turn at a game or lining up for lunch, boys were more likely to be picking each other up or gripping each other in headlocks, while girls might be holding hands or playing with each other's hair or clothing.

To summarize, children used peer interactions to accomplish the social objectives of establishing contact, receiving feedback on their perceived worthiness as affiliates, and expressing feelings of affection and belonging. They demonstrated an elaborate understanding of symbolic, ceremonial activity and a developing sophistication in their knowledge of social etiquette. They utilized a complex variety of interaction strategies for accomplishing their affiliation goals.

Competence Goals

Competence goals were discovered to be a second unifying domain of children's social objectives. In their face-to-face interactions with peers, children utilized a variety of strategies to establish that they were able students, capable of accomplishing school tasks, and that they deserved to be classified among the academically competent.

Children's classroom interactions contained abundant evaluative behavior. Children scrutinized the work of others and offered evaluations. Often they compared their work with that of others and frequently solicited evaluations from peers. They made special efforts to associate themselves with peers who were thought to be academically successful. Some field note examples demonstrate the evaluative tone which characterized many interactions.

> During an activity with the art resource teacher, Cheryl watches Amy as they complete each step (they're constructing a three-dimensional bird). Amy uses her crayon to make dots on one of the cut-out pieces (not part of the instructions). Cheryl sees Amy and stands to get a better

look. Amy holds up her work: "You like that?" Cheryl: "What is it?" Amy: "They're little spots so he can . . . [she can't think of anything]. You like that?" Cheryl looks nonplussed, says nothing, and sits down.

Children are making valentines at table 2. Amy to Elizabeth: "I'm finished, isn't it pretty?" Amy holds up her work. Elizabeth starts to deliver an enthusiastic "Ye . . ." but stops as she looks at Amy's valentine [which is a mess]. Elizabeth looks uncomfortable. Amy studies Elizabeth's expression and says: "It's not so good, huh?" Elizabeth wrinkles her nose, avoids eye contact with Amy and goes back to work.

Elizabeth to Benjamin: "You weren't supposed to do this." She holds up the remains of a paper he has cut apart. Benjamin: "Why?" Elizabeth: "'Cause they have to use these in the other groups." Sandra: "I didn't (do it wrong like Benjamin)." Teresa holds hers up: "I didn't." Sandra: "I didn't. I didn't." Benjamin points to Sandra's scrap pile: "Yes, you did." She did.

Children evaluated and sought the evaluations of peers. Analysis of patterns of evaluation exchanges suggested that children were using interactions to establish and confirm their academic competence in relation to others. The excerpts above offer examples of children exchanging information upon which determinations of competence were based. As with all socially constructed "objects," the competence attributed to each child was being renegotiated at each interaction in which evidence of skill or achievement was brought forth. Examining the ways children constructed and renegotiated their perceived competence will demonstrate the pervasive influence of competence goals on classroom social interactions.

Competence, as it is being used here, refers only to skills, abilities, and achievements related to things academic. Since such competence is always related in some degree to the substantive activity associated with classroom performance, purely ceremonial activity revealing competence goals was not evident in the data of the study. Children's competence goals were identified through the analysis of face-to-face ceremonial behavior around the classroom work in this kindergarten. Ways to request evaluation and ways to respond to evaluation were domains of behavior which led to an understanding of children's social goals in this area.

Ways to request evaluation were classified as direct or indirect. While working on their assigned tasks at the independent work table, children often stopped working, held up their work to a peer, and said, "Look at this," or "How's this?" Children varied this direct approach to requesting evaluation by forming "loaded" questions designed to influence the evaluation and/or provide a protective cover in the event that the evaluation was negative. Three examples of loaded requests follow.

> Louise and James are painting. Louise comes to James' side of the easel, studies his painting, says: "Oh, your sun is pretty, wanna see my pretty sun?"
>
> Sandra gets up from her seat at table 2, walks around to position next to Elizabeth, thrusts the camel picture she's been coloring in front of Elizabeth, and says: "Do you hate it?"
>
> Sandra is standing between Elizabeth and Amy at table 2. Sandra to Elizabeth: "Yours is pretty," referring to her coloring. Amy to Sandra: "Do you like mine?"

Children demonstrated a well developed awareness of the ways that phrasing questions or timing the delivery of questions can influence responses. Louise, in the first example above, set up a situation in which it would be very difficult for James to do other than find her sun pretty. In order to evaluate her sun as less than pretty, he would have to openly challenge her view that her sun was pretty and prove himself insensitive to her generaus evaluation of his efforts.

In the second excerpt, Sandra influenced Elizabeth's response and covered herself from a negative evaluation by asking, "Do you hate it?" Goffman (1967, p. 29) described similar behavior which he called "negative-attribute etiquette." Using this etiquette, adults protect themselves from the embarrassment of having others discover their inadequacies by beginning encounters with an open admission of their failings.

In the last example, Amy used the positive momentum of Sandra's evaluation of Elizabeth's work to influence Sandra's evaluation of her own efforts. Amy seemed to understand that Sandra's evaluation of her work was, because of the timing of

her request, a comparison of the work of Amy and Elizabeth.

In addition to direct requests, loaded and otherwise, children utilized other ways of requesting evaluation. The expectation that peer evaluation would take place was so well developed in the classroom that it reached the taken-for-granted level. On many occasions, when children completed particular tasks or even steps within tasks, they simply held their papers toward peers, said nothing, and, as expected, received evaluations. The understood quality of peer evaluation provided a context in which statements such as "I'm through" or "Finished" became abbreviated forms of evaluation requests. The taken-for-granted nature of evaluation request patterns provides strong evidence for the importance of peer evaluation as a contributor to children's social goals in face-to-face interactions. The fact that evaluation requests had, because of their familiarity to classroom participants, become symbolically abbreviated (Berger & Luckmsnn, 1966), illuminates the extent of influence competence goals had on classroom social behaviors.

Ways to respond to evaluation is an analytic domain which gives insight into how important the appearance of competence was in the studied classroom. When positive evaluations were received, children reacted with joy, reciprocal praise, and occasional arrogance. As was evident in the examples above, children felt a great need to receive positive feedback on their schoolwork. Their reputations as competent students were at risk in each interaction involving evaluation. When evaluations were favorable, they showed their relief and satisfaction.

Negative evaluations from peers brought out an assortment of strategies for dealing with the effects of such evaluations on children's goals of feeling competent and appearing competent to classmates. Children's responses to negative evaluations ranged from attacking the evaluator to quietly acceding to his or her judgement.

On several occasions, children reacted to negative peer evaluations by taking offensive (as opposed to defensive) action against those evaluating them. Most commonly, they turned negative judgements back on the evaluators. Occasionally

they tossed bitter retorts back at evaluators or attempted to discredit evaluators by making them appear callous or cruel.

Children used joking and laughter to diminish the effects of negative evaluations. Goffman (1967) describes similar approaches used by adults when they attempt to show that, 'what admittedly appeared to be a threatening expression is really a meaningless event, or an unintentional act, or a joke not meant to be taken seriously" (p. 20). Children also blamed outside influences as the source of their errors; e.g., "She made me do it."

Children sometimes flatly denied that their work was deficient. They covered their work with their arms, turned their papers face down, and even corrected errors while protesting, "It is not wrong."

Another frequently used response to negative evaluation was simply not to acknowledge it. Children changed the subject, turned away from evaluators, or carefully ignored their critics in order to avoid dealing directly with negative critiques.

A final way children responded to negtive evaluations was to accept the accuracy of the criticism, though begrudgingly at times, and move to correct the problem. Statements such as "I know" and "I'm gonna fix it" were common in such responses. Children taking this tack tried to minimize their embarrassment by quickly admitting their mistake so that evaluators were made to appear insensitive if they continued drawing attention to the error.

Children's complex ways of seeking and responding to peer evaluations argue for the thesis of this section; that children used child-to-child interactions to accomplish competence goals. When they interacted in peer groups where schoolwork was the topic of substance, their ceremonial objectives included feeling competent with regard to school tasks and believeing that others placed them among those students considered to be capable.

Status Goals

It is important to make a distinction between status goals and competence goals.

Competence goals were always tied to some observable behavior related to a school task. Children wished to feel capable of performing up to classroom expectations and to appear academically competent to their peers. Status goals were not necessarily tied to academic performance and always had to do with perceptions of influence and importance in relation to peers. Interactions in which the accomplishment of competence goals were being worked out among children were almost always colored by the overlapping influence of status objectives. The expression of status goals was not restricted to interactions involving schoolwork, but was evident across activity contexts.

Status, as it is used here, assumes the possibility of constructing a hierarchical arrangement of children from those with the least influence and peer esteem to those most respected and most able to exercise power over others. Children's interactions reflected their efforts to improve their position in such a hierarchy. Children's status objectives included the following: to feel more important or better in some ways than classroom peers, to be able to exercise dominance over others, to manipulate or control the actions of others, and to be able to assert their standing in relationship to the status of others. These goals were evident in many of the interactions analyzed in this study. Many interactions involving status goals seemed to be unrelated to any observable substantive activity; that is, they were dominated by ceremonial interactive behavior. Almost all interactions which were organized around substantive activities included identifiable status-related motives.

Children's conversations in small groups often followed this general form: one child made a statement which reflected his or her superiority (an accomplishment, a possession, or a personal quality was usually described); other children matched or topped the original statement with proclamations of their own; the first speaker reasserted his/her superiority; and the cycle continued. An example of this common form follows.

Don: "I'm tellin' my pet fox to come to school." (Coloring

a fox picture is part of their assignment at table 2.) James: "I'ma tell my pet fox to come to school." Don: "I'ma tellin' all my foxes to come to school." Roger: "I'ma have my daddy beat you all up." Don: "I gonna have all my foxes beat all those that's not my friend." Tess: "So what? I've got a German Sheperd." James: "I've got a German Shepherd." Sarah: "So, I got a Doberman." Don: "I've got a bunch." Tess to Don: "My German Shepherd'll bite you." Don: "I've got lots of zoo animals."

In one-to-one interactions and in small groups, children found a variety of ways to promote their own importance and to devalue the importance of others. They spent considerable time and energy introducing favorable information about themselves and unfavorable information about others. Whereas adults practice such behaviors in highly ritualized and sublte ways (Goffman, 1967), children in this study felt no need to disguise their self-promotions or attacks on others. The norm was to proclaim superiority, then defend against the inevitable challenges; or in the case of "put-downs," to point out the inadequacies of others, then react to their protestations.

For some children it was important to demonstrate dominance over other children. Some forced others to give up territory or materials using physical force or the threat of physical force. Some ordered others around, called them names, and otherwise abused them verbally. One child (Sarah), continued an on-going dominance relationship over another child (Bob) for the duration of the study.

While dominating behavior was seen consistently in only a few children, almost all children used peer interactions to attempt to manipulate or control the actions of others. Trying to control the acts of others sometimes worked to the disadvantage of those attempting the control acts. When those who were the object of such actions could turn the tables on their peers, those attempting to manipulate appeared foolish or inept. In the first example below, Rod successfully commanded Elizabeth, then, while he was feeling his superior status, anticipated a mistake in her performance. In the second excerpt, Benjamin seemed to be looking for someone to direct and was not successful.

Rod and Elizabeth each have a set of rubber squares with

numerals. They are each putting their own set in order at table 2. Rod gets to the end of the table and places his numeral across the end, moving into a space occupied by Elizabeth. Rod: "Move Elizabeth. Move Elizabeth." She moves. After Rod finishes, he studies Elizabeth as she works: "You better not put that." Elizabeth: "I didn't."

Benjamin to Teresa: "You got to wash your hands." Teresa: "I'm not finished yet." Benjamin: "I'm not finished either. You got to wash you hands." Teresa: "Not 'til I'm finished." Benjamin: "I'm not talkin' to you. I'm talkin' to Dee Dee." Dee Dee looks at him [with a self-satisfied expression], and wiggles her fingers in his face to show they are clean of paste. Benjamin: "So, I bet you have to wash your hair." Dee Dee: "No, I don't." Benjamin: "So, I don't either." With this, Benjamin glances at Dee Dee and leaves the table.

Much of children's interaction was characterized by the point-counterpoint quality of the last field note example. Children used peer interactions to improve their standings in relation to the status of others. They asserted their importance and attempted to diminish the importance of peers. The abilities to present one's self in a favorable light and to generate credible counters to status threatening behaviors by peers were important assets in an atmosphere in which relative status was redefined over and over. In the following sections, ways to practice self-promotion, ways to respond to self-promotion, ways to put others down, and ways to defend against put-downs will be presented. The description of these interaction typologies will further establish the pervasive influence of status goals on the social behavior of the young children in this classroom.

Ways to practice self-promotion involved offering information in interactions which had the effect of making the offerer appear superior in some way. In their most basic form, self-promotions were built on I am . . . , I can . . . , I did . . ., I will . . . , I have . . . , or I know . . . statements. Examples are: "I can talk Mexico;" "I have a Strawberry Shortcake; " and "I know what's 100 and 100."

Closely related to this basic "I am superior" form were statements in which children identified characteristics or possessions of family members, or others with whom the children were closely associated, which cast a favorable light on the speaker.

Frequently these self-promotions began with my daddy . . . or my mommy . . . . The most common statement among statements of this kind was, "My daddy can beat your daddy."

Ways to respond to self-promotions were as important to achieving status goals as self-promoting or aggressive kinds of moves. As relative status was defined and redefined in children's interactions, the ability to utilize a variety of defensive-reactive strategies for neutralizing the promotions of others, while placing one's self in a favorable position, was a valuable asset. Many of the strategies used by children in response to self-promoting behaviors of peers are described below.

Children utilized "one-upsmanship" and "bandwagon" strategies in response to self-promotions. One-upsmanship responses attempted to neutralize or diminish the effects of self-promotions by matching or topping the promoter's information. Bandwagon strategies were responses in which the respondents reacted to self-promotions by identifying themselves with the promoter or with the behavior being promoted.

Children used challenges to devalue the sources from which self-promoters were trying to gain status, or to discredit the self-promoters themselves. Children used approaches which ranged from simple challenges such as "So what!" or "No, you didn't" to more complex challenges which involved building logical cases against the contentions of promoters.

Another way children responded to self-promotions was to simply ignore them. Again, children's refusals to respond to direct communication from peers are almost unknown in adult interaction. When ignoring does occur with adults, the message to the interactant whose communication is ignored is, "You have so little status that I owe you not even the most basic courtesy." When children ignored self-promoting behaviors, promoters were not devastated but carried on as if the object of their promotions had simply not heard them.

A final way in which children responded to self-promotion was to accept the credibility of the promoter and the validity of his or her claims. Accepting responses were very rarely observed in the study. When acceptance was observed, it was apparent

that affiliation goals (to appear to be a supportive, therefore attractive, affiliate) took precedence over status goals.

Ways to put others down were identified. Children's relative positions in the classroom status hierarchy could be improved by raising themselves up or by causing the influence and peer prestige of others to go down. Ways of aggressively attempting to damage the status of others will be called "put-downs." Successful put-downs not only caused others to lose influence or prestige, but offered evidence of the power and social adeptness of the child accomplishing the put-down.

The most common kind of put-downs occurred when children pointed out the mistakes, weaknesses, or inadequacies of others. These and other put-downs had a "public" quality which is important to understanding their place in children's status goals. Put-downs were seldon communicated in private conversations from individual to individual, but were almost always undertaken with a wider audience in mind. Social esteem rests in the perceptions of others. Children publicly proclaimed the inadequacies of peers in an affort to maximize the impact of the put-down.

Occasionally, some children used subtle strategies for revealing unfavorable information about peers while securing favorable status for themselves. One such strategy was to turn a condescending attitude on classmates (e.g., "You're actin' silly, I'm doin' somethin' else," or 'We're not talkin' like that, we're not even going to repeat it"). Another indirect kind of strategy was to confront others with "loaded" questions. Loaded questions were those which, while appearing to be innocent, were calculated to force children to either do what the asker wished or place themselves in an unfavorable position (e.g., "Are you going to make me an 'I love you' card or just a plain one?").

Name calling was another put-down strategy used by children. Frequently, name calling accompanied other put-downs. Name calling included pointed statements such as, "You're stupid" and "You're the baddest kid in here" as well as derogatory references such as "dumbhead," "dork," and "do-do head." Elkind (1976) has suggested

that name calling signals the young child's ability to distinguish between words and the things they symbolize. The name calling described here did not have the quality of verbal play to which Elkind referred. There was an element of dominance in name calling behavior, as if an understood part of the message sent when calling another child dummy was, "and I dare you to do something about it."

Children demonstrated their attempts to exercise power over peers in ordering behavior, threats, and physical intimidation. Ordering behaviors were usually associated with establishing territories, securing materials, or managing the behavior of others. Children used an ordering tone to get children to change locations (e.g., "sit down," "get away from me," "move over"); to acquire materials ("gimme that," "get some more"); and to control others ("don't do that," "stop that," "keep quiet"). Children threatened each other with physical attack (e.g., "I'ma hit you," "I'll give you a black eye"); with exposure to the teacher ("I'm gonna tell"); and with unspecified consequences in "you better" statements ("you better not mess with me," "you better stop") which carried an unspoken but clearly communicated 'or else' with them. Physical force was used by a small number of children and during the study no "fights" between children were observed.

Children generally were not gracious winners when they came out on top in confrontations with peers. A final way children put others down was to "rub it in" when one child bested another. Public proclamations such as, "I beat you," "I got it and you didn't," or "I showed you" were common in the classroom. Rubbing it in behavior serves to accent the critical point; putting others down was a strategy children used for improving their relative status by diminishing the influence and prestige of others while asserting their own.

Ways to respond to put downs were defensive responses to put-down attempts by peers. These defensive strategies were important to children as they worked at protecting their status from the potential damages others could inflict. Since being foiled in attempts to discredit others offered public evidence of a kind of social

ineptness, defensive responses probably served to deter put-downs to some degree.

One way children responded to put-downs was to categorically deny the accuracy of the information presented in the put-down. Such denials had the tone of righteous indignation. Usually these took form in statements such as, "No, I didn't" or "Yes, I can." The tone of categorical denials seemed to carry the additional message, "And I'll hear no more about it."

Children also tried to refute logically the accuracy of negative information directed at them. They constructed logical cases from the actual situations involved, called on other children to witness the efficacy of their arguments, and on occasion, fabricated evidence in their own defense.

Another strategy for handling put-downs was to take an offensive posture and turn the aggression of the put-down back on the child making the original move. The most common form of this strategy was to turn name calling, ordering, or threats around and direct them back on aggressors in the same form. "You're a baby, Jerome" elicited "You're a baby, James;" "You better move" was answered with "You better move;" and so forth. Sometimes children's aggressive responses went beyoud echoing original put-downs. Some children embarrassed their challengers by accusing them of being "crazy" or "actin' funny." Some children launched full-blown retaliatory put-downs of those who challenged their status. These counter put-downs were not necessarily related in substance to the original accusations. The purpose of the counter attack was to impress on the challenger and others in the group that "I am not to be taken lightly" and that "those who attack me put themselves at risk."

Another set of responses to put-downs included an array of aggressive sounding but empty rebuttals such as, "So," "Oh yeah," "Shuddup," and "You better stop." These responses were voiced by children who had experienced a loss of prestige because of a put-down and who wanted to salvage some self-respect with a comment. However, they were at a loss for words and could offer only a rebuttal that conveyed anger but was empty of substance.

Children also used turning away, changing the subject, and other forms of ignoring in response to put-down attempts. When children were in situations where their mistakes or inadequacies were being exposed by others, they often dropped their eyes to the floor, their chins to their chests, folded their arms, and waited for the spotlight to pass. Children in such situations were also observed turning away from accusors to begin conversation with someone else, ignoring the put-down, and offering an entirely new line of conversation. Sometimes they physically left the scene.

Another response to put-downs was to make a public appeal for sympathy. This kind of defense was used to deter physical aggression by exposing the cruelty of aggressors and attracting protective support from others. Loud cries of "You hurt me" or "That hurt," and dramatic weeping were used to bring acts of physical aggression to public attention.

A final way children responded to put-downs was to accept the accuracy of negative information but work to reduce the effects by making a public confession, offering excuses, explaining the lack of severity of the offense, or "laughing off" the exposure as unimportant. Children made public gestures of accepting responsibility or making confession as strategies for reducing the damaging effects of being exposed in a compromising position. Typically they made a show of correcting mistakes ("See, I fixed it") or promised to do better ("I'm going to do it right next time"). In some cases, they turned the words of their challengers on themselves, as in the following exchange:

> Sue: "Bob get to work, you're makin' me mad." Bob: "Yeah, "I'm makin' me mad, too."

Children offered excuses to mitigate their embarrassment. Excuses included those related to the source of put-downs ("I lost my paper" or "I wasn't through yet") and those of a more general character ("I have a sore ear"). Children sometimes tried to reduce the impact of put-downs by laughing them off or explaining that they were not important. When faced with physical domination by others, some child-

ren allowed the aggressors to have their way, then covered by laughing and/or making statements to recover their status ("So, I don't care"). Children laughed off put-downs related to classroom performance in the same manner.

In this section, status goals and ways in which children sought to accomplish them have been explored. Children utilized face-to-face interactions to assert their status in relation to peers. They demonstrated facility with a number of offensive and defensive strategies for exercising power, establishing influence, and acquiring prestige in their peer interactions (for a more detailed treatment of status goals, see Hatch, 1985).

Conclusions

The findings of this study are an analytic description of social goals discovered in a single kindergarten classroom. Conclusions and implications drawn from such a study are necessarily limited. There is no suggestion here that identical social interaction patterns would be found in other classroom peer cultures. The power of the findings of this and other such studies is not in their generalizability, as defined by positivistic social scientists, but in their careful documentation of the behavior of particular groups in specific social situations. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) have argued that it is from such studies that descriptions of general social processes ultimately can be derived.

The following general conclusions are drawn from the findings of the study.

1. Children placed a high value on affiliation, competence, and status in relationships with their peers.

2. Children's knowledge of adult interaction patterns was substantial, yet incomplete.

3. Children demonstrated their capacities for generating and understanding messages at a symbolic, ceremonial level.

Children in the study had learned to place a high value on the affiliation of

peers, the image of academic competence, and a superior status position in relation to others. Their interactions in child-to-child contexts were dominated by efforts to achieve social goals in these three areas. They constructed patterns of expectations and norms which reflected the importance of affiliation, competence, and status in their classroom peer culture.

It is beyond the scope of this study to explain the complex socialization processes through which children internalize cultural values (Denzin, 1977; Dreitzel, 1973; Webb, 1981) or the impact of schooling on such processes (Henry, 1963; 1965; Parsons, 1959). It is interesting to note, nonetheless, the extent to which cultural values related to being associated to others in positive ways, appearing competent at school tasks, and establishing superior status had been internalized by the young children studied. It may be that the most complete expression of children's social values occurs in face-to-face peer contexts. Peer interactions offer unique opportunities for social expression because children are free to explore relationships with relative equals (Hartup, 1977; Ross, 1983). In adult-child interactions, the taken-for-granted superiority of adults may inhibit children's expression of developing values. Perhaps, as this analysis suggests, the true measure of values internalization by children lies in their behavior in face-to-face peer interaction.

Goffman (1963) referred to children as "communication delinquents" because often they violate the rules of adult interaction. Analysis of the interactions of children revealed that, indeed, their knowledge of ritualized adult etiquette was incomplete. However, their interactions were surprisingly sophisticated. Students utilized patterns ritualized by adults and demonstrated their developing understandings of adult interaction etiquette.

Goffman's sociology of face-to-face interaction has provided an interesting and revealing perspective from which to consider adult social behavior. A central theme in Goffman's work is the idea of interaction ritual. He argues that social order is

constructed from the hellos, goodbyes, compliments, apologies, and courtesies that are taken for granted in adult relations. These ritualized communications are the conventionalized means by which ceremonial respect and regard for others are expressed. Goffman details the patterns which define several types of inter-personal rituals (1963; 1967; 1971). The object of this study was not to explore children's use of interaction rituals (see Hatch, 1984a for such an analysis). However, while doing classroom observations and searching the data for interaction patterns, it became apparent that children's knowledge of adult rituals was substantial, yet incomplete.

The most striking area in which children's face-to-face behavior differed from adult patterns was access rituals-- "the little ceremonies of greeting and farewell which occur when people begin a conversational encounter or depart from one" (Goffman, 1967, p. 41). Adults use greetings to mark their intentions to engage in conversation, to reestablish roles that have been taken in previous encounters, and to signal their intent to behave according to the norms of polite interaction (Goffman, 1967; 1971). Children's greetings were not unknown in the study. They said "Hi" or "Hey" to others as they entered the classroom in the morning. However, reciprocal greetings, which are required in adult interaction, were virtually unknown. Completely absent were examples of the standardized adult pattern: "Hi, how are you?" "Fine, thanks. And you?"

Greetings were infrequent and unilateral. Farewells were virtually unknown in children's interactions. That child-to-child conversations lacked the closure which typifies adult interchanges was an early frustration for the researcher. Almost immediately in the analysis-observation cycle, it was discovered that children did not require a ritualized set of verbal or nonverbal markers to signal ends of conversations. Interactions seemed to "fizzle" without the concluding statements found in adult conversation.

Although their greetings and farewells were unlike those of adults, children

demonstrated well-developed knowledge of many components of mature interaction etiquette. Within the "ways to make contact" reported in the findings, was evidence of emerging understandings of many of the norms and rules which define adult interaction. For example, children used courtesies and compliments in ways very much like aduits; that is, to signal that they can be trusted to respect the images others are projecting in the interaction (Goffman, 1971).

Children had learned the importance of managing impressions in their peer relations. The domain of "status goals" and strategies for achieving them is a study of children's impression management techniques. Status among child peers, as with adults, rests in the perceptions of others. Status is renegotiated at every interchange and considerable social knowledge is required to operate successfully. The following are some examples of children's strategies whcih parallel adult impression management techniques described by Goffman (1959; 1967; 1971):

1. Children used hedging, joking, and teasing to protect their overtures toward others from the embarrassment of possible rejection.
2. They aggressively promoted their own status by offering favorable information about themselves while introducing unfavorable facts about others.
3. They challenged children who attempted to acquire status to which they were not entitled.
4. Children used sophisticated means to answer the challenges of others, including denials, explanations, excuses, and apologies.

It is difficult to explain why children seem at once adult-like and juvenile in their interactions. The worlds of children are complex. Children are learning and practicing social behavior in a variety of contexts with a variety of interaction partners.

Gleason and Weintraub (1976) pointed out that adults, usually parents, formally train their children to use verbal routines (e.g., "Say bye-bye," "What do you say?" "Say hello to Mrs. Jones") and that children learn to produce correct routines long before they learn what it means to do so. These same routines are not a part of spontaneous interactions among children. It may be that formally teaching children

to parrot access rituals has fallen on parents because such skills do not grow out of children's informal interactions with adults or other children. Adults, other than parents, do not demand ritual displays because of their shared perceptions of children's social immaturity (Gleason & Weintraub, 1976). Other children do not require access rituals perhaps because they see no function for them and sense no disequilibrium when such rituals are omitted.

In contrast, presentation rituals such as shows of politeness, deference, and appreciation (Goffman, 1967) and impression management rituals such as those described above help children accomplish their social goals. Describing the processes of learning adult interaction patterns is certainly beyond the scope of this study. However, it may be important to note that for these children the development of ritualistic forms was closely related to the functionality of those rituals in satisfying needs for affiliation, competence, and status.

This study focused on children's constructions of social events. It was framed within a symbolic interactionist perspective. Fundamental to that perspective is the axiom that individuals use the processes of interaction to form shared definitions of social situations. Effective participation in the construction of shared definitions requires the ability to generate and interpret symbolic communication -- hence the term symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969).

Children in the study demonstrated their capacities for utilizing symbolic, or ceremonial, communication to construct social events among themselves. Descriptions of the ways children went about accomplishing their social goals document patterns of behavior which include symbolic communication. For these children, an important function of child-to-child interaction was the satisfaction of social goals. Much of that satisfaction was accomplished at the ceremonial level of communication.

Taking the ceremonial level into account adds depth to considerations of the functions of children's talk. Descriptions of functions of children's communication (e.g., Halliday, 1975; Piaget, 1959; Schachter, Kershner, Klips, Friedricks, &

Sanders, 1974) have not addressed directly the functional role of ceremonial interchange. An important richness can be added to understandings of communicative functions by including the ceremonial dimension.

Halliday (1975) identified a "regulatory" function which provides children with the capacity for controlling the behavior of others. Along the same lines, Piaget (1959) described "commands, requests, and threats;" and Schachter et al. (1974) identified "desire implementation" categories. On the surface, these functions make sense given the findings of this study. Examples of each of these functional categories could be found in the data. The point is not that these functional descriptions are inaccurate, but that a richer understanding of interactive functions can be gained by looking below the surface.

The regulatory function described by Halliday, for example, is related to status goals described in the present study. Among status goals is the desire to influence or control the actions of peers. A careful analysis of the ways children go about influencing and controlling others, however, reveals interactive functions beyond simple regulating. As children in the study attempted to control others, they were promoting their relative status among their peers. Their actions took into account calculations of the symbolic advantage to be derived from control efforts along with the risk of embarrassment should those efforts fail to succeed. When reacting to the control efforts of others, protecting status became important and moves designed symbolically to minimize damaging effects were taken.

Social goals and the patterns of behavior children construct to accomplish them offer an enriched perspective to considerations of the functions of children's communication. By adding functions at the ceremonial level (e.g., to accomplish affiliation, competence, and status goals) additional understanding can be gained.

Goffman's (1959; 1963; 1967; 1971) work has revealed that society is constituted in the micro-order of the specific activities and communications of everyday face-to-face interaction. This micro-order must be created anew at each interactive encounter.

Re-creation is accomplished using a ritualized exchange of cues and gestures through which participants indicate to one another the roles they intend to take and the roles they expect others are taking. These cues and gestures make up the symbolic medium of ceremonial communication. Interpersonal rituals based in ceremonial communication provide the organizing structures which define civil relations in society. Children must learn to understand and create communications in the ceremonial idiom to function in adult society. It is this ceremonial function of communication that largely is missing from descriptions of children's language functions. It is the illumination of this function that can add depth to existing descriptions.

Implications

This study is an exploration into the social world of one kindergarten classroom. It is a description and analysis of the face-to-face reality constructed by five- and six-year-olds in school. The naturalistic approach taken in the study and the descriptive quality of the findings qualify the research for inclusion in what Wolcott (1976) called, "a growing literature that only collectively will constitute the ethnography of American schooling" (p. 24). The study documents children's social goals and strategies for accomplishing them in a particular setting. The findings make possible cross-contextual comparisons which may be useful to educational anthropologists and others interested in the construction of a collective ethnography.

The study of children's social goals adds an additional layer to considerations of the functions of communications in children. It may be that researchers interested in studying the forms and functions of children's talk will benefit from the added depth suggested by the social goals construct. Understanding that children's social relations are complex and that their face-to-face interactions include symbolic, "ceremonial" communications may influence researchers to ask broader kinds of questions as they study children's talk. Further, the methodological approach to uncovering such taken-for-granted phenomena as social goals demonstrated in this

research suggests applications to the study of similarly held social attributes in children.

The influences of peer interaction on the socialization of young children are not well understood. Neither is the interactive process through which children internalize values in their complex encounters across many contexts. Approaching the study of peer interaction and socialization from a face-to-face orientation may offer a fresh way of thinking about these important areas. Educational researchers and other social scientists may find the face-to-face perspective taken in this and similar studies offers enriched understandings of socialization processes. It may be that, in the same way the work of face-to-face sociologists has provided new insight into adult social behavior, so can the application of such a perspective improve understandings of children's social development.

Hinely and Ponder (1979) made a useful distinction between "improvers" and "describers" as they discussed the development and utilization of theory (p. 135). Researchers interested in improvement begin with questions such as, "How can things be changed?" For describers, three questions are of key importance. "A descriptive question -- what seems to be happening here?; an analytical question -- why are these events occurring?' and a question of understanding -- what do these events mean in the context of the classroom?" (Hinely & Ponder, 1979, p. 135). The study reported here is descriptive. The goal has been to provide a description and analysis intended to improve understandings of what actually happens in the social context of a classroom. Teachers and others responsible for children's experiences in school will find the descriptive findings of this study useful in understanding the ecology of classroom cultures. Teachers are observers of child behavior, hypotheses makers, and planners (Schultz, Florio, & Erickson, 1982). The descriptions and analyses of this study may give teachers an alternative framework from which to understand social interaction in their classrooms and new ways of thinking about children's motives and values.

Three specific suggestions for classroom practice are offered. First, it may be

that peer interaction contributes a great deal to the individual social and psychological development of children. That being the case, suggestions that children be given a wide variety of opportunities to interact with peers in a variety of classroom contexts seem appropriate (Black, 1979; Wilkinson & Dollaghan, 1979).

A second suggestion is that teachers exercise restraint when intervening in children's interactions. The social motives of children are complex and often not readily apparent. Unless children become disruptive, destructive, or cruel, teachers should avoid direct interventions. This does not mean teachers should abstain from teaching social skills or coaching children who are having difficulties getting along with their peers (Rogers & Ross, 1984). Teachers should make every effort to assist their students in making a healthy social adjustment. Important elements of that adjustment are worked out in interactions with peers and teachers may best serve their students' needs by refraining from too quickly imposing adult solutions on children's interpersonal encounters.

Third, teachers should make an effort to model adult interaction etiquette in their teacher-child interactions. The incomplete quality of child-to-child interactions described in the study is overcome as children learn to participate in interactions in a variety of settings with a variety of interaction partners. By consciously modeling access rituals such as greetings and farewells, teachers can "teach" the social behavior which gives closure and structure to interaction.

Genishi (1979) wrote on the similarities between teachers and researchers. She observed that both value information about how children behave and think, and both seek to facilitate children's learning and development. Genishi summarized: "The teacher of young children cannot teach successfully, nor can the researcher investigate fully, unless both consider what children themselves experience and think" (1979, p. 249). If this study has accomplished its aims, it is an analytic consideration of what children themselves experience and think. If teachers are encouraged to bring such considerations to their work having read this report, the research will have been of benefit.

Appendix A: Taxonomy of Social Goals

Social Goals

A. Affiliation Goal Domain

1. Ways to Make Contact

a. Direct Requests

b. Indirect Strategies

c. Conversation Openers

d. Nonverbal Entry

2. Ways to Check on Standings with Peers

a. Direct Requests

b. Indirect Requests

3. Ways to Express Feelings of Affection and Belonging

a. Direct Expressions

b. Effusive Expressions

c. Cooperative Expressions

d. Expressions of Loyalty and Sympathy

e. Physical Expressions

B. Competence Goal Domain

1. Ways to Request Evaluation

a. Direct Requests

b. Indirect Requests

2. Ways to Respond to Evaluation

a. Offensive Responses

b. Laughing It off Responses

c. Disclaiming Responses

d. Denial Responses

e. Avoidance Responses

f. Acceptance Responses

C. Status Goal Domain

1. Ways to Practice Self-Promotion

   a. Personal Superiority Promotions

   b. Associative Superiority Promotions

2. Ways to Respond to Self-Promotions

   a. One-upsmanship Strategies

   b. Bandwagon Strategies

   c. Challenging Strategies

   d. Ignoring Strategies

   e. Accepting Strategies

3. Ways to Put Others Down

   a. Pointing Out Inadequacies

   b. Expressing Condescension

   c. Name Calling

   d. Ordering

   e. Threatening

   f. Intimidating

   g. Rubbing It In

4. Ways to Respond to Put-Downs

   a. Denial Strategies

   b. Logical Strategies

   c. Offensive Strategies

   d. Covering Strategies

   e. Ignoring Strategies

   f. Sympathy Seeking Strategies

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